

~~TOP SECRET~~

CONTROL NO. BYE 2157-67

Copy 6

ER Via RB

REFERRED TO OFFICE	RECEIVED			RELEASED		NAME & OFFICE SYMBOL	DATE
	SIGNATURE	DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME		
ER							

EO 12958 3.3(b) (1)>25Yrs
(N)

Handle Via Indicated Controls

BYEMAN

Access to this document will be restricted to those persons cleared for the specific projects;

OXCART

.....

WARNING

This document contains information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws U. S. Code Title 18, Sections 793 and 794. The law prohibits its transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person, as well as its use in any manner prejudicial to the safety or interest of the United States or for the benefit of any foreign government to the detriment of the United States. It is to be seen only by personnel especially indoctrinated and authorized to receive information in the designated control channels. Its security must be maintained in accordance with regulations pertaining to BYEMAN Control System.

~~TOP SECRET~~

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

~~TOP SECRET~~
OXCART

EO 12958 3.3(b) (1)>25Yrs
(N)

BYE 2157-67
Copy 6
15 February 1967

BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
SUBJECT: OXCART Status Report

1. Briefing Scope:

Brief summary (a) operational status of OXCART program, (b) terms of decision to terminate program, and (c) status of phase-out plans.

2. Operational Status of OXCART Program:

a. Since December 1965, the OXCART program has been in an operational ready status to conduct photographic reconnaissance missions. Six operationally configured aircraft together with the operational team have been in constant training and operational flight simulations. They are postured for quick reaction use from [redacted] and for deployment to Okinawa for Far East operations in accordance with higher authority directions.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: AUG 2007

Handle Via
BYEMAN
Control System Only

~~TOP SECRET~~

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

~~TOP SECRET~~
OXCART

BYE 2157-67
Page 2

b. There remain a total of nine aircraft in the OXCART inventory; six operational configured aircraft, 2 flight test and one trainer aircraft. Last month, 5 January 1967 to be exact, we lost an A-12 aircraft, No. 125, and our first pilot, Mr. Walter Ray, during a training flight. The aircraft loss was attributed to a faulty fuel guage and related electrical equipment problem resulting in a depletion of fuel and engine flameout when in descent about 180 miles from our Nevada test site. The pilot sustained fatal injuries due to impact since normal parachute deployment was prevented as a result of a failure of the seat and pilot to separate during ejection sequence at 30-35,000 feet altitude. Corrective actions are under way following an Accident Investigation Board inquiry. (Since the inception of the program we have lost four aircraft: The first on 24 May 1963; the second, 9 July 1964; the third 28 December 1965, in addition to the above).

c. The history of the OXCART program has recorded that the aircraft have performed 2299 test and training flights and have accumulated over 3,628 hours of flying time with more

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM

OXCART
~~TOP SECRET~~

than 332 hours at MACH 3 and above. Simulated operational mission training flights are a routine occurrence and readiness to perform missions is being maintained at a high level.

d. I visited the OXCART base [redacted] Monday of this week (13 February) and found morale and readiness in good order despite the decision to terminate the OXCART program at the end of this year.

3. Terms of Decision to Terminate the OXCART Program:

a. After a six-month CIA/BOB/DOD study, it became apparent that the combined total size of the SR-71 (30 Aircraft fleet) and OXCART (then 10 but now 9 aircraft fleet) is too large to meet all probable mission requirements. Reduction of the combined fleet size appeared mandatory to save money.

b. The following alternatives were presented to the President by the BOB:

Alternatives: (1) Retain both A-12 and SR-71 fleets at separate bases and reduce the fleet by storing twelve

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM

BYE 2157-67
Page 4

SR-71 aircraft. Estimated savings, in 1968, \$25 million; five-year savings \$160 million. (2) Retain only SR-71 aircraft and assign 8 of them to CIA to be operated from CIA air base in Nevada. Estimated savings, in 1968, \$28 million; five-year savings \$252 million. (3) Retain only the SR-71 aircraft at a single base under Air Force management with possible use of some civilian crew for covert missions. Estimated savings in 1968, \$45 million; five-year savings \$365 million.

c. The President approved Alternative No. 3: (1) Retain only the SR-71 aircraft at a single base under Air Force management with possible use of some civilian crew for covert missions. (2) Mothball A-12 aircraft and phase-out the CIA fleet (now 9 aircraft) capability by January 1968.

4. Planning Phase-out Status:

a. Since early January, members of my staff and the D/NRO have held meetings to formulate basic planning assumptions and to set-up focal points for coordination in the Agency, Air Force and Department of Defense.

HANDLE VIA BY EMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM

~~TOP SECRET~~
OXCART

BYE 2157-67
Page 5

b. In addition, the D/NRO has solicited guidance from Mr. Vance regarding assumptions and related NRO/AF areas of responsibility.

c. Meanwhile, phase-out planning has been based on the Agency maintaining:

(1) OXCART operational capability through calendar year 1967, and

(2) Program control necessary to effect an orderly transfer or disposal of project assets, in consultation with the D/NRO and Department of Defense.

d. Agency Operational Concept for Remainder of 1967:

(1) 1 January to 30 June 1967:

(a) Maintain existing capability to conduct missions from selected overseas locations, such as, Kadena, and simultaneously from

(b) Readiness posture to include maintenance of 15-day response for reconnaissance requirements in Southeast Asia and 7-day response for reconnaissance requirements over Cuba.

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM

OXCART
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

OXCART

BYE 2157-67

Page 6

(c) Four aircraft (of 9 OXCART aircraft) would be mothballed and stored after 30 June 1967.

(2) 1 July 1967 to 31 December 1967:

(a) Maintain readiness posture to conduct quick reaction reconnaissance from either selected overseas locations but not simultaneously.

(b) The remaining five aircraft would be mothballed and stored after 31 December 1967.

(3) If required, it may be possible to extend the life of the OXCART program for a short period beyond 31 December 1967. However, the planned phase-down of spares, support, equipment and people would not accommodate an extension of more than a few months. A full resurrection of the program at this stage would require at least 9 months lead-time to refill the support pipeline in terms of equipment, spares, etc.

e. Some Salient Problem Areas:

Serious questions requiring resolution: How to mothball and where to store retired aircraft?

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM

OXCART

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

OXCART

BYE 2157-67

Page 7

(1) Normally retired Air Force aircraft are put in open storage at Davis-Monthan AFB, Tucson, Arizona.

Other locations such as Palmdale and [redacted]

also are under consideration.

(2) This problem is under study in conjunction with the D/NRO and Mr. Vance inasmuch as it is envisaged that mothballed aircraft would be available to the Air Force for use as a hedge against unanticipated or unduly high SR-71 attrition.

f. Contractors, People and Facilities:

(1) It will be necessary to disband the Agency/Air Force/contractor team operating the OXCART program involving directly over 2,000 people, including over 420 CIA/Air Force people. Our main problem during the year will be to keep the disengagement of people under strict control, otherwise our operational capability may be jeopardized. In any such termination, self-preservation impels people to want to jump ship.

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM

OXCART

~~TOP SECRET~~

BYE 2157-67
Page 8g. Security:

(1) The security of OXCART from inception has been of high order and the protection afforded to the program during its development and operational readiness phases will continue through termination.

(2) During phase-out, some relaxation of discipline must be expected, particularly among contractors and people leaving the program. Briefing and debriefings will be given special emphasis and attention.

5. Conclusion:

My staff will continue to work closely on the phase-out program in conjunction with the D/NRO, the Air Force and Department of Defense.

It is anticipated that by mid-March a coordinated phase-out plan will have been formulated.

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEMOXCART
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
OXCART

BYE 2157-67

Distribution:

- #1 - DCI
- #2 - DCI
- #3 - DDCI
- #4 - Ex. Dir. - Compt
- #5 - Legislative Liaison
- #6 - ER
- #7 - A/DD/S&T
- #8 - Spec Asst to DCI (Mr. Sheldon)
- #9 - D/SA
- #10 - D/O/OSA
- #11 - D/R&D/SA
- #12 - Compt/SA
- #13 - OXC Div/O/SA
- #14 - RB/SA
- #15 - DD/SA Chrono

OXCART
~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM